

Janette

By Paula Puddephatt

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"There was no reason. There was no reason. Just a foolish beat of my heart..."

Such familiar lyrics. June 1991. A much too familiar bus journey, on the Number Nine to town. Back to work. The Debbie Gibson tape plays on. The words resonate in new ways, ones Janette could never have anticipated.

The Walkman is not Jan's own. It is her stepdad's. The attackers stole hers. Along with so much else.

Her mind is a hazy blur, overflowing with disconnected images. Shattering realities. Distorted perceptions.

Janette was the one who lost her virginity in a brutal stranger rape. The police officers practically blamed her, because she had been drunk at the time. And the decisions that followed...

Janette's mother, along with Dr. Mary Rollins, the local surgery's only female GP, made the decision, overriding Jan's faint, futile protests. Morning after pill. Too early for pregnancy testing, apparently.

Janette would have kept the baby. Cherished him or her.

Janette had been violated twice: by the rapist, and subsequently, by her mother and that doctor.

2023. Janette's younger sister, Dawn, is married with two sons of her own. Younger brother, Mark, lives with his girlfriend, and they are expecting their first. Janette's mum feels no lack of grandkids. She's happily getting on with her own life.

Jan remains celibate and childless. Her family tell themselves it is by choice.

They tell themselves this, when they occasionally allocate the matter a brief thought in passing.

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